

4 April 2025

Comment from MBIE on Te Whatu Ora | Health NZ's exit from LAS

Health New Zealand's withdrawal as a participating agency to the LAS contracts currently managed by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) means that the organisation will no longer have access to the open syndicated contracts used to provide quality interpreting services for both telephone and video interpreting and face-to-face interpreting. These contracts provide both flexibility for agencies as well as assurance around managing the inherent risks associated with the communication of personal information, including extensive privacy and cyber-security assessments. The contracts do not preclude agencies from purchasing language assistance services directly outside of these contracts where needed.

For the period of December 2023 to November 2024, participating agencies utilised a total of 90,594 interpreting telephone or video calls. Health New Zealand was the sixth largest user of telephone and interpreting services behind MBIE, the Ministries of Justice, Social Development, the Accident Compensation Corporation and New Zealand Police.

While we note Health New Zealand's intention to withdraw as a participating agency from the open syndicated contracts, MBIE continues to promote cross-agency commitment to the [*Language Assistance Services Operational Policy for New Zealand public sector agencies and those they fund 2024*](#). These Guidelines were developed through extensive engagement with high-use agencies including MBIE, Justice and Health New Zealand. The guidelines promote the quality of interpreting services including the competency of interpreters and provides useful guidance on how to prioritise and identify when qualified interpreters should be used and where un-credentialed language assistance can provide support. Flexibility was built into both the Guidelines and the open syndicated contracts to enable agencies to manage their own use of language assistance services as needed.